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SUBJECT: WISNER TO KOSOVARS: SIX WEEKS TO COME TO CLOSURE
WITH AHTISAARI

Classified By: COM TINA S. KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In separate meetings on July 27 with President Fatmir Sejdiu and the entire Kosovo negotiating team, U.S. Special Representative for the Kosovo Status Talks Ambassador Frank Wisner stressed the need to stay unified and to use the next six weeks to bring Kosovar Albanian negotiating positions on decentralization and cultural heritage closer to those of UN Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari. He also asked the negotiating team members, as leaders of their respective political parties, to make sure they and their constituencies do not react to provocations in the north. He advised Prime Minister Agim Ceku to start thinking strategically -- specifically, he asked Ceku to contemplate Kosovo's democratic development over the next several years and be proactive in addressing those issues that would pose problems. Wisner reiterated to Kosovo Serbs, including the mayor of the northern municipality of Zvecan, that now is the time to engage with the Kosovo government institutions and that the international community is looking for realistic solutions for Serbs to stay on here after final status. Wisner's call to COMKFOR Valotto for a greater permanent KFOR presence north of the Ibar met with assertions that KFOR has enough soldiers at a recently reactivated base in Leposavic, as well as in bases just over the horizon south of the Ibar, to deal with any prospect of violence post-status. Non-Serb minority leaders complained that the Kosovo government does not take their concerns over minority protections sufficiently into account.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) During his July 26-28 visit to Kosovo, Special Representative Ambassador Frank Wisner met with COMKFOR Valotto, Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, the Kosovo Albanian negotiating team, leaders from the "Six Plus" non-Serb minority coalition, representatives from the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM), and Zvecan (northern Kosovo) mayor Dragisa Milovic. Wisner had a private dinner with Prime Minister Agim Ceku, and visited the return site of Svinjare, where he saw the progress the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) is making repairing Serb homes and outbuildings damaged during inter-ethnic violence in March 2004. COM accompanied Wisner to all of his meetings.

13. (C) Wisner praised Sejdiu and the entire Kosovo negotiating team for their performance during the July 24 High Level Meeting on Future Status in Vienna with senior Serbian government officials. He said he particularly admired Sejdiu's vision of the future of Kosovo and the collective views of the entire Kosovo delegation. Wisner stressed that now was the time for the negotiating team to maintain cohesion. He told Sejdiu privately, and the negotiating team collectively, that UN Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari believes he will be able to finish drafting a settlement agreement after the next six weeks. The USG, Wisner said, hopes that during this time the Kosovo government positions on decentralization and the protection of Serbian Orthodox religious heritage will come closer to those of Ahtisaari and his staff. Wisner noted his sense, gained during meetings July 25 in Belgrade, that both Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica and President Tadic wanted to finish discussions on decentralization so that they could show the Serb electorate they cared about the plight of Kosovo's Serb community. Wisner assured first Sejdiu and then the entire Unity Team that the USG agreed that Belgrade should be able to assist Kosovo Serbs, but that the U.S. and the Contact Group would resist any attempt by Belgrade to carve the Serb community out of Kosovo.

14. (C) Wisner asked Sejdiu to lead a unified negotiating team to the conclusion of negotiations and to maintain political discipline in the face of provocations by Kosovo Serbs north of the Ibar. Wisner advised Sejdiu to give the USG and the Contact Group the opportunity to act on behalf of the Kosovo

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government in the face of provocative actions north of the Ibar River. (NOTE: The unity of the negotiating team was tested not more than one hour after these morning meetings, when opposition members of the Kosovo Assembly from Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo and Vetton Surroi's Reform Party Ora refused to take their seats in the assembly to hear a report from Sejdiu on the results of the Vienna meeting. Opposition members told us they boycotted the session because Sejdiu had failed to obtain "clearance" from other negotiating team members for the presentation. END NOTE.).

15. (C) In his subsequent meeting with the entire negotiating team, Wisner built on many of the points he made with Sejdiu. He asked the negotiating team to find common ground with Ahtisaari on the size of municipalities and the competencies (particularly the selection of police chiefs, Serbian language curriculum in primary and secondary schools, medical care and infrastructure) to be transferred to the new municipalities. He added that as political leaders in their own right, it is important for negotiating team members to keep their discipline despite provocations from Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade. He again stressed that the Kosovo Albanians should let the international community take the lead in responding to these provocations.

Wisner to PM Ceku: Take the Long-Term View

16. (C) Over dinner at the COM's residence with PM Ceku and his two primary political advisors, Wisner asked Ceku to begin thinking strategically about Kosovo's long-term democratic and economic development, and to consider what could go wrong after Kosovo's status is determined. Ceku noted that his greatest concern is that huge expectations after status for jobs and economic development will not be fulfilled, leaving people bitter and disenchanted with the government. Wisner also asked Ceku to think about what type of provocation Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs might try in the north to effect some sort of soft partition. Ceku drew on his military experience in Croatia to observe that Serbs

might start their partition drive with small-scale action -- closing roads or making political declarations -- and later build to more significant activity, depending on the degree of support from Serbia. At Ceku's suggestion, Wisner agreed that it might be wise if Ahtisaari or his team visited Pristina in August "to meet with the deciders" -- i.e., to try and wrap up a deal on decentralization and cultural heritage away from the glare of the spotlight in Vienna.

Non-Serb Minorities Anxious Prior to Settlement

17. (SBU) Meeting with representatives of the Bosniak, Roma and Turkish communities, Wisner told them that Kosovo had crossed an important threshold at the July 24 meeting in Vienna, because it was the first time that elected leaders of Kosovo and Serbia met and talked to each other, frankly and respectfully. Minister of Health Sadik Idrizi, an ethnic Bosniak who attended the meeting in Vienna as well as the previous meetings on decentralization also held there, noted that he did not feel that the positions of non-Serb minorities are given enough support and added that these communities feel as though their interests will be left aside as part of the final settlement. (NOTE: The negotiating team has always had at least one member of the non-Serb minorities on its team to talks in Vienna. END NOTE.) Specifically, their concerns were focused beyond the settlement and on the construct of an eventual constitutional framework for Kosovo -- minorities, Idrizi and the others said, would seek specific mention in the new constitution in order to safeguard their rights.

Tough Love for Kosovo's Serbs

18. (C) Wisner's message to the Kosovo Serbs was clear: get yourselves involved in the game in the very near future or

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you will not have any cards to play. He noted pointedly to SLKM (Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija) reps Oliver Ivanovic and Randjel Nojkic that "there is a very limited amount of time -- six weeks -- in which Martti Ahtisaari will come to a conclusion. If anyone has an opinion that would help him come to that conclusion, this is your last opportunity.8 Oliver Ivanovic was equally frank with Wisner, quizzing him on Wisner's meetings in Belgrade and admitting that &your impressions are often better understood to us than messages coming from Belgrade.8

19. (C) Ivanovic's primary interest centered on the solidarity of the Contact Group (CG) to resist partition. Wisner responded that the CG statement after the July 24 Vienna status meeting had been supported by all members, including Russia, and said he did not see that changing. Discussing possible scenarios in northern Kosovo after the status settlement was announced, Ivanovic was clear that &partition would be bad for the north.8 Wisner concurred, saying that any Serbian support, tacit or otherwise, for either a declaration of partition or a locally-based insurgency would have the effect of creating long-term damage to U.S. (and Western) relations with Serbia.

Northern Mayor Guarded on Serbs Remaining in Kosovo

110. (C) Wisner later met with Dragisa Milovic, the mayor of the northern majority Serb municipality of Zvecan. (NOTE: Though Milovic himself is not the most difficult of the three northern mayors, the Zvecan municipal assembly was the first to declare in early June that it would cease cooperation with Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government. END NOTE.) Speaking frankly, Wisner told Milovic that the USG believes deeply that the Kosovo of the future, regardless of the outcome of final status talks, must be a home for Serbs, Albanians and other ethnic groups. He added that it was the

desire of the international community to have Kosovo's status determined by the end of this year, and as with his other interlocutors, told Milovic that in the next six weeks, critical work would be undertaken to come to an agreement on decentralization and church properties and that the international community is looking for realistic solutions for Serbs to stay on here after final status.

¶11. (SBU) Milovic responded that an independent Kosovo would be unacceptable to Kosovo's Serbs and that an independent Kosovo would be inescapably monoethnic. He added firmly that no Kosovo Serb would send his/her children to a school at which the curriculum was developed by Pristina, and no Serb family would use an Albanian hospital. That said, Milovic was careful not to assert that Serbs would inevitably leave Kosovo post-status, concluding that -- in his personal opinion -- if Serbs were allowed to manage their own local affairs, a final status agreement along the lines envisioned by Wisner (giving Serbs dual citizenship, protecting Church properties and giving individual municipalities broader powers over education, law enforcement and medical care) might be acceptable as a basis for co-existence.

Wisner Wants Larger KFOR Footprint in the North

¶12. (C) Wisner met early in the day with COMKFOR Giuseppe Valotto and KFOR Chief of Staff (COS) Brigadier General Albert Bryant (U.S.) and stressed the need for a visible and permanent presence of KFOR troops in the north. Valotto assured Wisner that since May 1 there are more KFOR troops both stationed at Camp Nothing Hill in the northernmost municipality of Leposavic (with one company currently present, another scheduled to arrive mid-August, and capacity for a third by September, thus a full battalion strength), as well as increased patrols and heightened activity in the north by French and Danish KFOR troops based south of the Ibar River. Bryant noted that before May 1, KFOR troops in the north performed highway traffic patrols and random vehicle searches, but that they have now increased patrols

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and heightened interaction with villagers. Wisner again urged that the KFOR troops have as visible a profile as possible, and emphasized the importance of building up presence before the settlement, in order to serve as a deterrent for provocative Serb and Albanian behavior in the immediate aftermath of the status announcement.

¶13. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
KAIDANOW